



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### **TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH February 27, 2013**

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#### **House Bill 5240 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF HOOKAH LOUNGES.**

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The Department of Public Health provides the following information regarding House Bill 5240. The stated intent of this bill is to authorize greater regulation of hookah lounges, which could help to reduce the risk of secondhand smoke exposure to Connecticut residents.

Hookahs are water pipes, used to smoke specially made tobacco by burning it and then filtering the smoke through water. The hookah is heated using charcoal that increases health risks: even after passing through the water, the hookah tobacco smoke contains high levels of toxic compounds including carbon monoxide, heavy metals and cancer causing chemicals.<sup>1</sup>

Hookah smoking is not a safer alternative to smoking cigarettes or other forms of tobacco use, and is associated with many of the same health risks as cigarettes and other forms of tobacco. These include lung, mouth and other types of cancer, heart and respiratory diseases. Hookah smoke delivers significant levels of nicotine, the highly addictive substance found in tobacco.

Hookah use is especially popular among young adults and 'hookah bars' are frequently opened near college campuses. Hookah smoking is typically done in groups with a shared mouthpiece which can transmit infectious diseases. Even if they are replaced with disposable mouthpieces and/or tubes, bacteria that thrive in the warm, moist environment of a water pipe may inhabit the water in the bowl, body or head of the container. Sharing hookah may increase the risk of transmitting tuberculosis, viruses such as herpes or hepatitis, and other illnesses.<sup>1</sup>

A typical one hour session of hookah smoking exposes the smoker to the volume of smoke equivalent to smoking over 100 cigarettes<sup>2</sup>. Secondhand smoke from hookahs poses more risk for nonsmokers than that from cigarettes because it contains both smoke from the tobacco and smoke from the heat source (e.g., charcoal) used in the hookah.<sup>3</sup> Employees should be protected by being allowed to work in a smoke free environment.

Establishing smoke-free environments is the only proven way to prevent exposure, as research has shown that secondhand smoke cannot be controlled by ventilation and creating separate areas does not eliminate the hazard of secondhand smoke exposure.<sup>4</sup>

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The Department of Public Health supports measures for protecting Connecticut residents from the ill effects of tobacco use in all forms.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

References:

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov/tobacco](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco).
2. World Health Organization, *Tobacco Regulation Advisory Note. Water Pipe Tobacco Smoking: Health Effects, Research Needs and Recommended Actions by Regulators*, Geneva: World Health Organization, 2005
3. American Lung Association, *An Emerging Deadly Trend: Waterpipe Tobacco Use*, 2007
4. *How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: The Biology and Behavioral Basis for Smoking-Attributable Disease: A Report of the Surgeon General*. 2010

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